



## Cultural Resources on Santa Cruz Island

### An archaeological record of island life

#### *The Chumash Record*

- Ninety percent of Santa Cruz Island is listed in the National Register of Historic Places for its archaeological significance.
- Approximately 3,000 archaeological sites on Santa Cruz Island reflect nearly 10,000 years of habitation by Native Americans. These sites include:
  - Eleven historic Chumash villages
  - Quarries for stone tool manufacture
  - Rock cave shelters
  - Rock art
  - Shell mounds known as middens, which reflect patterns of resource use over time
  - Prehistoric and historic period burials
  - Neighboring Santa Rosa Island contains the oldest positively-dated human remains in North America, dated at 13,000 years ago
- Artifacts offer exceptional research opportunities and exciting windows into island life over several thousand years. Undisturbed sites can provide excellent insights into how people adapted to changing environments and cultural conditions.
- The Channel Islands are significant to modern Chumash as their ancestral homeland. Of the modern Chumash that live in California today, many individuals can trace their ancestry to specific island villages. The Chumash retain a lively interest in the preservation and management of their heritage.



## Current threats to cultural resources

- With the exception of the damage caused by feral pigs and by erosion caused by years of grazing, Santa Cruz Island's archaeological sites have remained relatively undisturbed because of a lack of intensive human development and the absence of burrowing animals, such as gophers and squirrels, on the island.
- Feral pigs threaten to destroy this rich past. Pig rooting has damaged nearly all of the known archaeological sites. Some shallow sites have been completely destroyed. Rooting in deeper, more complex sites disturbs time and spatial relationships, ruining the context of information contained within these sites. For archaeologists, such damage is comparable to ripping a page from a historical record.
- Pig rooting has disturbed sacred prehistoric and historic burials. Excavation to a depth of three feet has been noted at a number of sites.
- While a less immediate or extensive problem on Santa Cruz Island, "pot hunting" of artifacts and disturbance of archaeological sites by individuals is a persistent threat to archaeological resources in many national parks.

## What is being done

- The National Park Service is mandated to protect the significant cultural resources of Channel Island National Park.
- In spring 2005, The Nature Conservancy and the National Park Service will begin eradicating feral pigs on Santa Cruz Island.
- The eradication of feral pigs from Santa Cruz Island will help save 10 federally listed species and eliminate a critical and immediate threat to the unique and extensive archaeological record that exists on Santa Cruz Island.
- The island's archaeological sites are too numerous and widely distributed for fencing to be used as a viable method to protect them.

